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## Research Note

# The Hegemony of Representation: Democracy and Indigenous Self-government in Bolivia

Jason Tockman

**Abstract:** In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the 2009 Constitution articulates a multidimensional conception of democracy, reflecting a legacy of social movement mobilizations that demanded political inclusion and propelled to power a president who self-identifies as Indigenous. Many anticipated that Bolivia could present a propitious environment for an invigorated and post-liberal democracy. This article evaluates the three dimensions of democracy enshrined in the Constitution – representative, participatory, and communitarian – with the aim of understanding the relationship among them. I focus on two important sites of democratic practice: the process of drafting and approving the Constitution, and the construction of “Indigenous autonomies”; that is, institutions of Indigenous self-government based on communitarian democracy. While Bolivian democracy is more stable and inclusive under the current government than under previous ones, this study finds that the expansion of sanctioned participatory and communitarian democratic processes has been limited vis-à-vis the hegemonic system of representation.

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**Keywords:** Bolivia, indigenous rights, democracy, representation

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## Introduction

Bolivia's 2009 constitution articulates the combination of three dimensions of democracy – representative, participatory, and communitarian – the coexistence of which has been characterized by Boaventura de Sousa Santos and others as “demodiversity” (*demodiversidad*). Santos and his collaborators emphasized that a low-intensity liberal-representative democracy has become established as globally hegemonic since the 1970s. The present article draws on qualitative research that has been ongoing since 2011 in order to assess the state of democracy and Indigenous self-government in Bolivia since 2009.<sup>1</sup> More broadly, I aim to understand the significance of the participatory and communitarian innovations advanced in the context of Latin America's so-called “left turns.” I find that the three forms of democracy not only exist at different levels of government, but also overlap with one another, including within new territorial units of Indigenous self-government. As elaborated in the 2009 Constitution and the country's laws, Bolivia's system of representation continues to account for most significant policy outcomes. However, representation is complemented by communitarian and participatory processes in various ways that enhance the country's historically exclusionary democracy. It is also evident that communitarian and participatory democratic mechanisms are constrained by representative institutions in several ways. The Bolivian narrative confirms Santos' and his colleagues' claims of the dominance of representative democracy.<sup>2</sup>

Beyond the Constitution's elaboration of the three forms of democracy and its expansion of political space for Indigenous self-governance, the case of Bolivia provides important leverage to understand these political phenomena, in several ways. First, the country's vibrant social movements have been highly effective in pressing their demands for enhanced space for participatory and communitarian democracy, which has shaped the current legal framework in which Indigenous rights and democratic participation occur and are negotiated. Second, with a majority of the population self-identifying as Indigenous, President Evo Mo-

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1 This article is based on field research conducted in Bolivian cities and majority-Indigenous municipalities from 2011–2017; methods included semi-structured interviews; observation of events; and analysis of primary and secondary texts.

2 Support for this research was provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Author is grateful to Maxwell Cameron for inspiring and guiding this analysis of the forms of democracy, to Barbara Arneil for extensive and constructive feedback on an early draft of this manuscript, and to Karina Guzman for assistance with translation.

rales's Movement toward Socialism (MAS) party has adopted an indigenist discourse centered on plurinationalism<sup>3</sup> and Mother Earth (*pachamama*). Third, public debates regarding democracy, citizenship, liberalism, and capitalism are commonplace, both on the streets of Bolivia and in its many levels of government, while the power of conservative political parties that introduced and sustained neoliberalism has been debilitated. Thus, Bolivia presents an excellent study of how democracy and Indigenous self-government interact in what in many ways is a highly propitious environment for "substantial innovation in terms of deviations from mainstream notions of liberal democracy" (Wolff 2013: 33). However, this article concludes that, far from its colorful discourse and symbols, the MAS's centralization of power has in many ways constrained political space for the practice of participatory and communitarian democracy. This conclusion illustrates that even in a relatively favorable setting, Indigenous rights face serious challenges in contemporary nation-states with colonial histories.

## Democracy and Indigenous Self-government in Bolivia

The rights of Indigenous peoples and their ability to govern their own affairs in a given state are inseparable from the struggle for democracy. Indeed, Lucero observed, with regard to the Andes, "the rise of indigenous politics is about nothing less than the finding of a democratic route toward decolonization and a decolonizing route toward democracy" (2008: ix). Yet not every political system that might be called democratic is sufficiently inclusive to allow for the realization of Indigenous rights. On the contrary, the history of democracy, both globally and within Latin America, has until quite recently been a story of marginalization of Indigenous peoples in which gains in rights have come at the margins of generalized social and political exclusion. Because there is no necessary link between democracy and Indigenous rights, it is critical to understand the quality of democracy and the forms it takes in a given country.

Diverse democratic regimes emerged across Latin America from the dictatorships and authoritarian regimes of the 1970s and 1980s. These democracies – often delegative or populist, underpinned by clientelism and patronage, weakly institutionalized party systems, and subject to periodic coups d'états – do not neatly conform to some scholars' pre-

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3 "Plurinationalism" emphasizes the plurality of nations within a state, as opposed to multiplicity of cultures of "multiculturalism."

scriptions or expectations of Western models of liberal democracy (e.g. Huntington 1991; Diamond and Morlino 2004), and are not easily captured by Eurocentric theories of democracy that assume such things as the separation of powers, efficient bureaucracies, civilian control of the military, and a privileging of the individual vote over collectivist or corporatist processes. As O'Donnell argued, the assumption that there is a "clear and consistent *corpus* of democratic theory" and that these theories can be easily transposed from established to emerging democracies is not justified (2007: 2, italicized as in O'Donnell's original text).

Bolivia's democratic history (1952–1964, 1982–present) squarely fits O'Donnell's characterization of the "reluctant acceptance of the inclusive wager" (2004: 25), and was marked by violence and exclusion until 2006. From 1985 to 2005, a series of "democratic" administrations frequently maintained order through violent repression. Elections for the presidency and Congress remained an elite affair of pacted agreements between parties that brokered systems of patronage and clientelism until 2005. Outside of Bolivia's official channels of power, praetorian mobilization from below punctuated the exclusionary politics through repeated "cycles of contention" (Tarrow 1998) that increasingly challenged the inability of neoliberalism to respond to or incorporate those on the marginalized side of ethnic and class cleavages.

Following the election of President Evo Morales in 2005, 61 per cent of Bolivian voters approved a new Constitution, supporting a novel political architecture that promises a more inclusive, participatory, direct, and representative democracy, and which extends the rights of citizenship to Indigenous peoples for the first time since the founding of the Republic almost two centuries ago. With the guiding principle of plurinationalism, the 2009 Political Constitution of the State (Constitución Política del Estado, CPE) articulates a "participatory, representative and communitarian form of democracy" (Article 11). These three forms of democracy are conceived of as reinforcing one another by providing complementary routes of democratic inclusion. The Constitution created a path for constructing the aforementioned Indigenous autonomies – *autonomía indígena originaria campesina* (AIOC) – and established that some national and departmental legislators will be chosen exclusively by and from Indigenous communities.

The long process of drafting the new Constitution itself signifies the most prominent instance of officially sanctioned participatory democracy in contemporary Bolivia. The popularly elected Constituent Assembly that led this process was a consequence of the sustained social movement mobilizations from 2000–2005, led by peasants and Indigenous

peoples, among others, who sought to fundamentally “refound” the state. These groups overcame long-standing divisions to form the Unity Pact in 2004. In August 2006, the Pact submitted a joint position for the refounding of the state to the Constituent Assembly in Sucre, which adopted much of the Unity Pact’s proposal. Thus, the Constituent Assembly that the Unity Pact groups had called for, and which was created after the election of Morales, was widely perceived as a “foundational political moment,” with the Constitution it drafted considered an “originary” document rather than one “derived” from the old political order (Garcés 2011: 47). However, the almost intractable divisions within the Constituent Assembly between the MAS and its allies and oppositional Assembly Members meant that the product of that constituent moment, approved in December 2007, was subjected to a series of revisions by the Congress. Those modifications, which involved more than 100 articles, were the product of negotiations between the MAS and conservative opposition lawmakers – remnants of the old political order (Centellas 2013). Consequently, the revised text, finalized in October 2008, was a negotiated, “derivative” text that emerged from “already constituted powers rather than those rising up through social mobilization” (Garcés 2011: 47).

Some have noted that the compromises made at the final stage of negotiation were crucial in resolving the political impasse. By securing input from the opposition, the MAS was able to mollify conservative opposition to the CPE enough to submit it to public referendum (M. Cameron 2010). Others have argued that the Congress’s *metiendo mano* (sticking their hands into) fundamentally disarticulated the constitutive nature of the text (Garcés 2011). Santos observes that:

the constituent process, as it advanced, was changing the power relations in favor of the conservative opposition, which was only unable to claim the approval of the final text as a victory due to its political myopia. (Santos 2010: 78, translation by author)

The revised text prohibited Indigenous seats in the national legislature from crossing departmental boundaries, and restricted them to rural areas where Indigenous people are a minority (Article 146); removed language that would preclude the “ordinary” system of justice from reviewing decisions arising through communitarian justice (originally in Article 192); and made non-retroactive new spatial limits (5,000 hectares) on large agricultural land holdings (Article 399) (Garcés 2011).

Through the congressional intervention into the product of the Constituent Assembly’s deliberations, we see that numerous features of the constituted political order were sustained. The legislature’s modifica-

tions of the Assembly's work highlight the interplay of the various forms of democracy in two respects. Firstly, in both the Assembly's process and product, there has been a combination of institutional influences toward the production of a hybrid text that emphasizes representative, participatory, and communitarian processes. Secondly, considering that it was the Congress that left the final imprint on the CPE, this particular expression of demodiversity is colored by a distinctly representative tint.

Consequently, even as the negotiated constitutional text opens new communitarian spaces for Indigenous self-government, it also fundamentally constrains it. The Constitution reserves control of non-renewable natural resources to the central government, including where such resources underlie Indigenous territory: "The natural resources are the property and direct domain, indivisible and without limitation, of the Bolivian people, and their administration corresponds to the State on behalf of the collective interest" (Article 349). With regard to the important natural gas sector, Article 359 adds that: "The State, on behalf of and in representation of the Bolivian people, is owner of the entire country's hydrocarbon production."

The central government's indisputable control of natural resources is not accidental. In December 2011, as Morales officially received the first completed statute of Indigenous autonomy (that of the Uru peoples of Chipaya), the president clarified that, contrary to the claims of some local agents, Articles 349 and 359 apply to all Bolivian territory – including the new Indigenous autonomies:

In the Constitution, it says that natural resources belong to the Bolivian people under the administration of the Plurinational State. In some regions, [people] are trying to generate confusion [...] some of our brothers say that, because they have Indigenous first peoples autonomy they are entitled to the natural resources. [These], especially the hydrocarbons, metal and non-metal [mineral] resources, belong to the national government. (*Los Tiempos* 2011)

Morales's interpretation highlights how, despite the country's discursive conversion into a "plurinational state," political practice frequently sustains a republicanism that prioritizes the universal over the particular.<sup>4</sup>

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4 In developing this analysis, I am grateful for suggestions by Barbara Arneil, who reviewed an earlier draft of this article.



## Indigenous Institutions of Self-government in Bolivia

As the 2009 Constitution ushered in a novel legal framework, it had various significant effects on Indigenous self-governance and official spaces for communitarian democracy. The CPE substantially altered Bolivia's territorial organization and government institutions, structuring them anew around a series of "territorial entities": a central government based in La Paz, nine departments, 112 sub-departmental provinces, and 327 municipalities, which typically include an urban center and the surrounding rural areas.<sup>5</sup> Indigenous autonomies can be created through the conversion of other territories, and represent a fifth type of territorial entity. All of these territorial entities except provinces are considered "autonomous" zones of governance with constitutionally defined "competencies" in a non-hierarchical rubric.

Virtually every part of the Bolivian state has been modified by the Constitution in ways relevant to Indigenous peoples, including all the organs of the national government, many ministries and agencies (including the creation of the Ministry of Autonomies, which was demoted to a Vice Ministry in January 2017), and all levels of government, from national to departmental to municipal level. Nationally, the principal institutions of government have been reorganized as "organs" that are conceived as functioning together holistically within the unitary state. In the bicameral Plurinational Legislative Assembly (Asamblea Legislativa Plurinacional – ALP), which replaced the former Congress, "special Indigenous first peoples peasant seats" are established in rural zones in those departments where they constitute a minority (Article 146.VII).

Since 2009, the ALP has approved numerous laws required to implement the new order, several of which apply directly to Indigenous rights. Many of these new laws have progressively constrained the provisions of the Constitution that had expanded spaces for Indigenous self-government and communitarian democracy. One representative of the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia (Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia – CIDOB) explained that, with approval of the Constitution, CIDOB had "achieved our demand, or proposal, what we wanted [...] that was fulfilled. And henceforth, we have had many problems."<sup>6</sup> Salgado Moreno described these developments as "a regression or notable brake that returns Indigenous peoples to almost the same

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5 As of July 2017, there are 337 municipalities.

6 From interview in Santa Cruz, 5 March 2012.

level of progress as before the approval of the 2009 Constitution” (2011: 226). A notable example is the 2010 Electoral Regime Law, which specifies that only seven of the ALP’s 130 deputies will be “selected” by Indigenous peoples, one from each of the country’s nine departments except Chuquisaca and Potosí (Article 57.I).<sup>7</sup> This was immediately criticized by Indigenous groups, which have pointed out that the selection process is not consistent with Indigenous norms, and that the number of allocated seats is not sufficiently representative.

Many of the most significant changes to Bolivia’s democratic institutions that relate to Indigenous peoples have occurred at the local level. Indigenous autonomies are constitutionally endowed with a broad range of authorities, including elaborating development strategies and land management plans, levying taxes, exercising communitarian justice, and managing renewable natural resources. Approximately three dozen municipalities and Indigenous territories (*territorios indígenas originarios campesinos* – TIOCs) are at some stage of converting to Indigenous autonomy, at the center of which is the process of elaborating autonomy statutes – codified local rules that will govern the new territorial units.

External agents have played significant roles in the elaboration of Indigenous autonomy in the pilot AIOCs. Principal among these agents were the central government, its contracted consultants (*técnicos*), political parties (most significantly the MAS), and non-governmental organizations. The roles of these agencies and groups are multifaceted and cannot be caricatured simply as constructive accompaniment or subversive cooptation. However, this participation has had real effects in that it has ensured that the incipient AIOCs embed themselves in the country’s legal framework and reinforce the central goals of the unitary state.

The fact that AIOCs exist at all is a product of the central government’s past support for Indigenous self-government, especially up to and including the drafting of the 2009 Constitution. Yet, since that time, the MAS government has progressively become ambivalent toward Indigenous autonomy, acting as much to limit these spaces as to support them. Beyond the Ministry of Autonomies, a general lack of state support for the construction of Indigenous autonomy is evident in the government’s meager provision of financial resources to execute AIOC conversion, the delayed commencement of the process for TIOCs, and the numerous and complex bureaucratic requirements that communities must fulfill to transition to Indigenous autonomy. These factors led one spokesperson

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7 All Indigenous people in a given department are merged into an aggregated circumscription.

of the National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyu (CONAMAQ) to allege that the central government lacks the “political will to support the theme of Indigenous autonomy.”<sup>8</sup> Similarly, an Indigenous representative from Salinas de Garcí Mendoza commented, “There has not been progress on the theme of the AIOC; it places new requirements and conditions. It is not self-determination.”<sup>9</sup>

The central government and MAS’s ambivalence toward Indigenous autonomy has been on display during many of President Morales’s public appearances around Indigenous autonomy. In Charagua, when Morales was the featured speaker at a 2009 campaign rally as the municipality prepared to vote on Indigenous autonomy, the president did not explicitly refer to the referendum or encourage those in attendance to vote for it (Albó 2012). At a May 2012 event in Mojocoya during which Morales formally received the municipality’s statute, he again did not acknowledge Indigenous autonomy.<sup>10</sup> And when he received Chipaya’s approved statute in 2011, Morales took the opportunity to warn that the conversion to Indigenous autonomy does not provide Indigenous peoples with control of natural resources. These omissions and assertions suggest that for Morales, Indigenous autonomy is at best a low priority, and at worst a problematic initiative that needs to be carefully controlled.

Where the central government has been actively involved in AIOC processes, it has both helped and hindered them. In Mojocoya, Tarabuco, and Charagua, *técnicos* intervened extensively in the meetings of autonomous assemblies. Their counsel was not always limited to the neutral, technical advice that many would hope for in putatively autonomous and deliberative processes. However, the impact that *técnicos* have had has been less a matter of inserting substantive content into the statutes than the continuous influence of a legalistic logic that seems to have circumscribed the scope of what local agents perceive Indigenous autonomy to be. As John Cameron observed, “Indigenous peoples have adapted their supposedly ‘autonomous’ community-based modes of decision-making to fit into the political opportunities created by the state,” and in doing so, “they have also become increasingly circumscribed into the managerial logic of the Bolivian state” (J. Cameron 2010: 12).

The MAS birthed a new political era for Indigenous self-government, marked by both disjuncture and continuity; however, since 2009

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8 From interview on 6 November 2013.

9 From field notes by John Cameron, Ministry of Autonomies meeting, 25 April 2013 (author’s translation).

10 From personal communication with Pere Morell i Torra, 25 May 2012, author’s translation.

there has been a discernible shift in the MAS's legislative and executive leadership to a more critical approach to Indigenous rights. This evolution is principally a consequence of the changing nature of the MAS as it has moved from the opposition to an elected government. When in the opposition, Morales and the MAS were one component of the social movement mobilizations against the country's neoliberal program. The MAS, a self-described "political instrument" of diverse and sometimes incongruous social movements, assembled a broad coalition of progressive sectors and pledged to include Indigenous peoples politically. Since taking office, Morales and the MAS have contended with different pressures: governing in Bolivia's complex landscape of social and political forces, and grappling with a position in the global economy that makes it difficult to chart an economic program not based on the extraction of natural resources. The MAS has encountered the electoral imperatives of being a government that wants to retain power in a diverse and conflictive political terrain, and has therefore sought to centralize power and corral social forces within the party (Anríu 2010). Concomitantly, it has attempted to address poverty reduction and economic growth through a program of resource nationalism. This programmatic orientation has sometimes conflicted with Indigenous peoples' demands for greater territorial control; this has meant, since 2009, a growing official ambivalence toward a program of Indigenous autonomy – and communitarian democracy more broadly. In practice, communitarian democracy exists locally, while representation – by means of elected executives and legislators – continues to account for most national, regional, and even local economic and social policies. These observations support the claims of Santos and his colleagues regarding the contemporary dominance of representative democracy.

However, since 2010 a new round of mobilizations have proliferated across Bolivia – frequently in relation to the government's natural resource policies. Expressing participatory forms of democracy that take place outside of official institutions, these marches, protests, blockades, and strikes have often included Indigenous peoples. Numerous social sectors united during the 2011 *Gasolinazo* protests to force the government to abandon policies that increased gas and diesel prices. Indigenous peoples have mobilized to demand greater territorial control, most significantly in the case of the proposed highway through the Isiboro Sécure Indigenous Territory and National Park (TIPNIS), home to Yuracaré, Tsimané, and Mojeño Trinitario Indigenous peoples. In response to the government's draft Mining Law, Ley #535, confrontations erupted when cooperativist miners blocked roads in 2014, resulting in

two deaths, more than 100 injuries, and the reported taking of 43 police officers as hostages (Dangl 2014). Hundreds of Bolivian soldiers went on strike and marched through La Paz, demanding “decolonization” of the armed forces, which they criticized for the lack of career advancement, especially for low-ranking soldiers of poor and Indigenous backgrounds (*Página Siete* 2014). A series of regional and sectoral mobilizations have also given voice to a range of other grievances: residents of El Alto demanding expedition of the census, those of Potosí demanding development projects, many communities insisting on resolution of municipal boundary disputes, and labor groups demanding policy changes and better wages. To a significant degree, a grassroots and participatory politics of protest in the streets has been a dominant feature of contemporary Bolivian democracy.

## Forms of Democracy

The contemporary discourse and practice of Bolivian politics provide a useful vantage point to examine the possibilities and limits of the distinct dimensions of democracy. Many scholars have paid particular attention to the quality and diversity of democratic regimes, based on multiple standards of assessment (O'Donnell, Vargas Cullell, and Iazzetta 2004; Diamond and Morlino 2004; O'Donnell 2007). O'Donnell and his coauthors (2004) proposed a shift toward thinking about the “quality of democracy” or “democraticness” as a concept that incorporates not just the political regime, but also criteria such as institutional performance, the character of political life, and the aspirations of a country's citizens. Other observers of Latin American democracy have conceptualized democracy as having multiple dimensions, conceiving of representative, participatory, and communitarian forms of democracy that coexist amicably and/or contradictorily (Santos and Avritzer 2005; Santos 2010; Seele and Peruzzotti 2009; Cameron, Hershberg, and Sharpe 2012; Exeni 2012).

What must “rule of the people” mean if it is to include Indigenous peoples? An inclusive democracy must not only exceed elections and extend to certain rights and freedoms, but those rights and freedoms must apply both to individuals and groups. Indigenous peoples, in contrast to Indigenous people (individuals), are collective political subjects whose right to participate and be represented cannot be contained within strictly liberal strategies that serially aggregate the rational preferences of putatively autonomous individuals. Though marked by great variation, the norms and procedures of Indigenous peoples – which are drawn

from but are probably rarely identical to pre-colonial processes and structures – generally involve collective decision-making that occurs in ways that look very different from voting by secret ballot. Under systems of communitarian democracy,<sup>11</sup> decisions are often arrived at and authorities are often selected through deliberative assemblies where participation is neither universal nor secret. In the selection of authorities, a common practice among Andean Indigenous peoples is to form a queue behind candidates, each of whom has already fulfilled a series of positions within the community; the candidate with the longest line behind him or her is chosen for the position of authority. Decisions are often made by consensus of those attending assemblies. At these meetings, it is common for a married person, usually male, to represent the family unit in what is conceived of as gender complementarity. If we are to conceive of democracy as something that includes inhabitants that are Indigenous, and does not obligate them to abandon their political and cultural practices in order to be political subjects, then democracy needs to recognize and accept such group processes. This requires us to think beyond the suppositions of liberal democracy. “Thinking beyond” does not mean that democracy abandons liberalism, but that liberal processes alone cannot encompass Indigenous political norms.

Numerous scholars have studied participatory forms of democracy that occur within state institutions, such as referenda, recall, citizens’ initiatives, community councils, and participatory budgeting (Selee and Peruzzotti 2009; Cameron, Hershberg, and Sharpe 2012), but participation also occurs outside of official institutions and perhaps even in open opposition to them, including petitions, demonstrations, strikes, and other forms of grassroots mobilization. While officially sanctioned spaces often provide avenues by which historically excluded groups may participate in ways that enhance democratic goals (namely, inclusion, representation, and accountability), it is also apparent that these seemingly constituent processes can be perverted, including the clientelistic ambitions to build support for the administration implementing these institutions (Santos and Avritzer 2005). Indeed, participatory gestures may be conceived of by policy makers as a means to abdicate state functions, devolving responsibilities and expenditures to civil society (Cameron, Hershberg, and Sharpe 2012). However, Selee and Peruzzotti (2009) emphasized that participatory institutions are unlike Latin America’s

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11 The term “communitarian democracy,” as employed here, refers to Indigenous political institutions and processes, and is not intended to connect with broader, often normative philosophical debates over communitarianism (e.g. MacIntyre 1981).

conventional response – populism – which seeks to bypass representation by directly linking the leader to “the people”. In contrast, participatory democratic institutions complement and can enhance representative ones.

Although Bolivia’s new institutions of Indigenous self-government can be fairly characterized as participatory, they also entail distinct structures and processes that cannot be wholly contained within that dimension of democracy. Some practices of communitarian democracy vary from one nation to another, and even sometimes from one territorial unit (for example, an Aymara *marka* or Guaraní *capitanía*) to another, adjacent one. That said, numerous communitarian practices are significantly generalized across Quechua and Aymara communities, including norms of gender complementarity, *chachawarmi*, through which positions of authority, *cargos*, are held by married couples, although in most cases with the man as the primary authority figure; and the rotational holding of positions, or *muyu*. These communitarian processes are distinct from representative and participatory modes of democracy (as well as deliberative, liberal, and republican ones) in that they are based on Indigenous practices that do not adhere to the standards of other forms of democracy, such as the centrality of the autonomous, rational individual and the universal secret vote of liberal democracy.

As noted above, the coexistence of representative, participatory and communitarian forms of democracy has been conceived of as demodiversity by Santos and Avritzer (2005), and the term has been taken up by numerous scholars of Latin American democracy (e.g. Exeni 2012). Demodiversity, as these scholars have conceived it, is based on two observations: (1) there are multiple forms of democracy, and (2) the “hegemonic” liberal-representative model of democracy does not necessarily ensure more than a “low intensity democracy” (Exeni 2012). Santos and Avritzer (2005) claimed that the global ascent of liberal democracy since the 1970s has led to a decline in demodiversity. The low-intensity liberal democracy they decry is globally hegemonic due to its compatibility with the social inequality of neoliberal globalization. This is because the rise of that brand of capitalism held the economic realm to be beyond democratic considerations, and because political accountability has been limited to voting (Santos and Avritzer 2005: lxxv).

The question to which these literatures point is whether the varying democratic forms reinforce or undermine one another. My response is that while new institutions of communitarian and participatory democracy can certainly complement and even enhance the practice of representative democracy, there remains in Bolivia a clear hierarchy of repre-



sentative over communitarian and participatory processes, impairing the practice of the latter two.

## Conclusion

This article's findings contribute to an understanding of the coexistence of representative, participatory, and communitarian dimensions of democracy, as Bolivian politics express demodiversity in various and complex ways. In terms of representation, legislators and executives are elected at the state's various levels. Participation occurs through the occasional recall or referenda held, in the Constituent Assembly process of 2006–2007, and in the frequent strikes, protests, and marches that flare across the country. Communitarian democracy is practiced at the level of the community and within the incipient Indigenous autonomies. However, this demodiversity does not entail a simple delegation of dimensions of democracy to distinct levels of government (that is, representation nationally, communitarian locally). Elections and representation occur at every level, including municipally; the system of justice incorporates communitarian processes and structures alongside the “ordinary” ones; and seven legislative seats are chosen exclusively by Indigenous people. Demodiversity is expressed within the AIOCs themselves, with deliberative assemblies coexisting with executive and legislative bodies, and secret balloting taking place in tandem with consensus-based processes. However, this article finds that the MAS has prioritized representative democracy at the expense of participatory and communitarian forms of democracy.

This investigation is instructive for comprehending the significance of the participatory and communitarian innovations of Latin America's so-called “left turns.” Latin American accounts of the diverse forms of democracy have suggested that these dimensions of democracy can be complementary and mutually reinforcing (Lissidini 2012; Pogrebinschi 2012). The present study supports the complementarity between dimensions of democracy; this is illustrated by the presence of circumscriptions that are elected by Indigenous peoples in the national and departmental legislatures, and the communitarian democracy unfolding in AIOC construction. The latter provides Indigenous agents with new political avenues that, by all accounts, augment rather than conflict with Bolivia's system of representation.

However, communitarian and participatory democracy have faced numerous obstacles, especially when they have sought expression beyond the local level. In the drafting of the new Constitution, we observe



the contentious interplay of representative and participatory democratic forms, with the modification of the Constituent Assembly's work by a subset of the formerly elected Congress, which left a significant and final imprint and ensured that the 2009 Constitution would give greater emphasis to representation. Consequently, representation continues to account for most policy outcomes. Candidacy for the legislature's Indigenous circumscriptions is frequently mediated by political parties, and the number of seats has been limited to seven out of 130. In the judicial realm, primacy is given to the "ordinary" system of justice, with communitarian justice relegated to relatively minor crimes and conflicts. In the construction of Indigenous autonomy, communitarian democracy is constrained by the system of representation, due in part to the MAS's efforts to maintain influence at the local level, including by running its own candidates against those chosen through local assemblies according to Indigenous norms. Access to Indigenous autonomy, by which communitarian democracy can be enhanced, faces numerous obstacles. Consequently, as of July 2017 – seven and a half years since the AIOC processes commenced – Charagua, Chipaya, and Raqaypampa remain the only Indigenous communities to have navigated the entire process and converted to Indigenous autonomy. Meanwhile, residents of Totora and Mojocoya overwhelmingly voted their statutes down.

All of these observations support Santos and Avritzer's claim of the dominance of representative democracy, and suggest that despite the compatibility of dimensions of democracy, tensions and resistance may materialize where communitarian and participatory democratic mechanisms are being implemented. Thus, while new institutions of communitarian and participatory democracy complement and enhance practices of representation, we see in Bolivia that a clear hierarchy of representative over communitarian and participatory forms continues, to the detriment of the latter dimensions.

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## **La Hegemonía de Representación: Democracia y Autogobierno Indígena en Bolivia Contemporáneo**

**Resumen:** En el Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia, la Constitución de 2009 articula una concepción multidimensional de democracia, reflejando un legado de movilizaciones de movimientos sociales que demandaban inclusión política y propulsaron al poder a un presidente que se auto-identifica como indígena. Muchos anticiparon que Bolivia podía presentar un ambiente propicio para una democracia vigorizada y post-liberal. Este artículo evalúa las tres dimensiones de la democracia consagradas en la Constitución – representativa, participativa y comunitaria – con el objetivo de entender la relación entre ellas. Me concentro en dos sitios importantes de práctica democrática: el proceso de elaboración y aprobación de la Constitución, y la construcción de las “autonomías indígenas”; es decir, las instituciones de autogobierno indígena basadas en la democracia comunitaria. Mientras la democracia boliviana es más estable e inclusiva bajo el actual gobierno que bajo los gobiernos previos, este estudio encuentra que la expansión de procesos democráticos participativos y comunitarios sancionados ha sido limitada frente al sistema hegemónico de representación.

**Palabras clave:** Bolivia, derechos indígenas, democracia, representación